

NEW ENGLAND NOTE

MYOSURUS MINIMUS (RANUNCULACEAE) IN
NEW ENGLAND WITH NOTES ON
FLOWER MORPHOLOGY

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The diminutive winter annual known as mouse-tail, *Myosurus minimus* L., was discovered in Westport, Bristol Co., Massachusetts on 22 May 1988. A few hundred plants occupied bare, clayey soil of a fallow field south of Briggs Road and west of route 88 in the company of weedy species such as *Capsella bursa-pastoris* (L.) Medic., *Erophila verna* (L.) Chevall. ssp. *praecox* (Stereon) Walters, *Veronica p. peregrina* L., *Plantago rugelii* Dcne., and *Chamomilla suaveolens* (Pursh) Rydb. Collections (BAS 4179) have been deposited at GH and in my personal herbarium.

Although this weedy species enjoys a wide range in temperate North America and Eurasia and is therefore not unexpected in New England, a search of available floras, atlases, checklists, and specimens at GH indicate that it heretofore has not occurred closer than southeastern Pennsylvania and southeastern Virginia as an adventive, and southern Ontario as a native species. Available collections amply demonstrate its preference for vernal wet, clayey, circumneutral to alkaline soil. Native populations apparently often occur on or near limestone outcrops, while adventives have been recorded most frequently from fallow fields and roadside depressions.

There appears to be some confusion in the literature about flower color, morphology, and presence of petals. Although the Westport *Myosurus* was flowering and fruiting prolifically, there was but a single flower per scape, apparently the norm for this species. Flower color was an attractive, pale lilac-pink color, not yellowish green or whitish as stated in the manuals, and was due to the presence of five narrow petals which fit precisely against each greenish sepal. Each sepal bore a slender whitish spur which pointed downward, closely appressed to the scape. Sepal and petal blades are essentially identical in size and shape, such that on dried specimens, when the latter have lost their distinctive color, one may distinguish them only by carefully teasing the two apart. Thus, unless careful examination is made, dried specimens may

appear to lack petals. Westport plants retained their lilac-pink petals even as the receptacle elongated into the diagnostic "mouse-tail," finally dropping along with the sepals as maturation of the mouse-tail neared. The stamens were topped by ovate, maroon anthers, which dropped some time before the petals.

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